

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 AID-20 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SS-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OPR-02 RSR-01

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R 151002Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9891

USIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2055

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJECT: UNP CAMPAIGN FOR BOYCOTT OF LAKE HOUSE NEWSPAPERS.

REF: COLOMBO 1949

1. SUMMARY: UNITED NATIONAL PARTY (UNP) BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN AGAINST LAKE HOUSE PUBLICATIONS (REFTEL) LED TO NO VIOLENCE. UNP HAS DECLARED CAMPAIGN COMPLETE SUCCESS; UNITED FRONT (UF) GOVERNMENT HAS DECLARED IT COMPLETE FAILURE. TRUTH LIES SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN. END SUMMARY.

2. EXAMINATION OF AUGUST 1-3 BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN FINDS BOTH UNP AND UF EXPRESSING EQUAL SATISFACTION. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WAS ABLE TO CONTROL FOLLOWERS, AND NO VIOLENT INCIDENT HAS BEEN REPORTED IN SPITE OF WIDESPREAD PICKETING AND DEMONSTRATIONS BY UNP SUPPORTERS.

3. JAYEWARDENE TOLD UNP WORKING COMMITTEE THAT BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN
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WAS COMPLETE SUCCESS BUT IT WAS ONLY FIRST STAGE AND CAMPAIGN

WOULD BE RESUMED AT LATER DATE. ABSENCE OF EXPECTED VIOLENCE MAY ENCOURAGE UNP LEADERS TO USE BOYCOTT TACTIC ON WIDER AND MORE FREQUENT SCALE. SENSITIVITY OF UF LEADERS TO BOYCOTT TACTIC, REMINISCENT OF THEIR OWN PAST ACTIONS, WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY CONCENTRATED PRESS CAMPAIGN IN LAKE HOUSE NEWSPAPERS TO BELITTLE BOYCOTT, RADIO SPEECHES BY FOUR MINISTERS DEFENDING LAKE HOUSE TAKE-OVER, AND UF LEADERS' PROTESTATIONS THAT BOYCOTT WAS NOT APPROPRIATE WHEN DIRECTED AGAINST "SOCIALIST" GOVERNMENT.

4. UF REPORTEDLY HAS CIRCULATION FIGURES WHICH SHOW BOYCOTT HAD NO EFFECT AND IT IS CONVINCED CAMPAIGN WAS COMPLETE FAILURE. LAKE HOUSE SOURCES TELL US, HOWEVER, THAT THERE HAS BEEN AT LEAST SIX PERCENT DROP IN CIRCULATION SINCE GSL ASSUMED TRUSTEESHIP ON JULY 20. WHETHER DECLINE HAS BEEN CAUSED BY BOYCOTT CAMPAIGN OR BY TAKE-OVER ITSELF IS UNCLEAR.

GDS

VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

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